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Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 INR-07 SCA-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INSE-00 AID-05 DEAE-00 SY-05 H-02 L-03 VO-03

/051 W
---------- 104062
R 220915Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7831
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
CINCPACREPPHIL
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 10781

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CASC, VN, RP, UNHCR
SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES: BOAT CASES

REF: (A) STATE 180673; (B) HONG KONG 8394; (C) HONG KONG 8329

1. EMBOFFS MET WITH UNHCR REP DHAR TO REVIEW INDOCHINESE REFUGEE SITUATION ESPECIALLY BOAT CASES. THERE HAVE BEEN AT LEAST NINE BOATS SINCE APRIL WITH 11 PASSENGERS. DHAR SAID HIS MOST IMMEDIATE PROBLEM ARE THE TWO GROUPS OF REFUGEES NOW AT SUBIC. ONE GROUP OF 17 IS IN BOAT WHICH WAS TURNED AWAY FROM HONG KONG (REFTEL C) WHILE THEOTHER GROUP OF 31 ARRIVED IN MINDORO. DHAR SAID GOP INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE MET YESTERDAY (JULY 21) AND HAD
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TENTATIVELY DECIDED TO REFUSE THESE REFUGEES PERMISSION

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TO LAND. DECISION IS CURRENTLY BEING REVIEWED WITH
WORKING LEVEL APPARENTLY TRYING TO HAVE IT RESCINDED.
DHAR SAID IT IS REFLECTIVE OF GROWING FEELING ON PART
OF GOP, PARTICULARLY FORSEC ROMULO, THAT PHILIPPINES
ALONE IS TAKING IN REFUGEES WHILE EVERY OTHER COUNTRY
IN AREA IS TURNING THEM AWAY AND THAT SOMEHOW
PHILIPPINES WILL BE "STUCK WITH" REFUGEES. DHAR SAID
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS GARCIA HAS
TAKEN CONSISTENTLY HELPFUL LINE AND HAS POINTED
OUT TO ROMULO NUMBER OF REFUGEES WHO LEAVE PHILIPPINES
FOR RESETTLEMENT. HOWEVER, ROMULO RECENTLY ASKED WITH
SOME IRRITATION WHY REFUGEES COULD NOT SIMPLY BE
PROCESSED AT SUBIC (PRESUMABLY BY USG) AND NOT BE
BROUGHT TO MANILA AT ALL. DHAR OPINED THAT GOP IS
ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE TO SITUATION AT FABELLA CENTER
IN MANILA WHERE MOST VIETNAMESE REFUGEES HAVE BEEN
TAKEN. ACCORDING TO DHAR, THERE ARE NOW ABOUT 185
REFUGEES THERE ALTOUGH THE NUMBER IS DECLINING, E.G.,
33 DEPARTED FOR ABROAD ON MORNING 21 JULY 1976. DHAR
SAID HE HAS ALSO TALKED TO DEPPHIL MILITARY LIAISON
OFFICER AT SUBIC, COLONEL LOPEZ (WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS
HELPFUL) AND WAS TOLD LOPEZ HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED FUTURE
REFUGEES SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO LAND BUT GIVEN FUEL,
FOOD AND TOLD TO MOVE ON. DHAR SAID AS PRACTICAL
MATTER, WOMEN AND CHILDREN ABOARD BOAT FROM HONG KONG
ALLOWED ASORE.

2. DHAR SAID HE HOPED THAT IF OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED
ITSELF, USG WOULD EMPHASIZE TO GOP EXTENT TO WHICH US
AND OTHER NATIONS HAVE ASSISTED INDOCHINESE REFUGEES
AS WELL AS NUMBER OF REFUGEES WHO ACTUALLY HAVE DEPARTED
PHILIPPINES. DHAR AGREED WITH EMBOFF THAT GOP,
ESPECIALLY ROMULO, HAD PROBABLY BECOME MORE SENSITIVE
TO PROBLEM SINCE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH SRV.
DHAR SAID HE HAD PROVIDED GOP WITH LEGAL MATERIAL ON
REFUGEE QUESTION ANDPOINTED OUT THAT ACCEPTANCE OF
REFUGEES IS NOT UNFRIENDLY ACT UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW.

3. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS HAD NO RPT NO OFFICIAL WORD
FROM GOP THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE IN GOP POLICY TOWARD
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INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. AS WE SEE IT,
SHEER GEOGRAPHY MAKES IT EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT FOR GOP
TO ADOPT POLICY OF SIMPLY TURNING AWAY BOAT LOADS OF
REFUGEES AS HAS BEEN DONE IN HONG KONG OR KUALA LUMPUR.
THERE ARE FEW PLACES FOR REFUGEES TO GO TO FROM THE
PHILIPPINES WITHIN SAFE SAILING DISTANCE AND GUAM IS
VERY FAR AWAY. IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE IF GOP, WHICH
PRIDES ITSELF ON ITS HOSPITALITY AND HAS PURSUED

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RELATIVELY HUMANE COURSE OF ACTION VIS A VIS REFUGEES,
SHOULD NOW DECIDE TO REVERSE THIS POLICY. UNHCR REP
SAID HE WILL MAKE THESE POINTS WITH GOP AS WELL AS
STRESS POTENTIAL FOR NEGATIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS SHOULD
GOP EMULATE HONG KONG'S DEPLORABLE EXAMPLE AND COMPEL
UNSEAWORTHY VESSELS CROWED WITH WOMEN AND CHILDREN
TO DEPART. FOR THE PRESENT, EMBASSY BELIEVES
THAT MOST EFFECTIVE AVENUE OF APPROACH TO GOP ON THIS
ISSUE IS THE UNHCR/REP HERE. WE WILL CONTINUE TO
WORK THROUGH HIM AND LET HIM TAKE THE LEAD WITH GOP.
EMBASSY WILL CONSIDER APPROPRIATE SUPPORTING ACTION
WITH GOP AS DEVELOPMENTS MAY DICTATE. SULLIVAN

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